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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 14 September 2015 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to draw your urgent attention to the rising tensions in Occupied East Jerusalem. The illegal actions and constant provocations and incitement by Israel, the occupying Power, including in particular by right-wing Israeli government officials, extremist settlers and religious zealots, against the Palestinian people, their land and their holy places are aggravating already high tensions, religious sensitivities and the fragile situation on the ground, threatening to ignite religious conflict and further destabilize the region, which is already experiencing unprecedented instability and upheaval.

For two consecutive days, extremist Israelis escorted by occupying forces broke into Al-Aqsa Mosque compound (Al-Haram Al-Sharif), the third holiest site in Islam, in Occupied East Jerusalem. Israeli occupying forces injured and detained Palestinian worshippers, prevented the entry of Palestinian worshippers and instigated violent confrontations, using tear gas, stun grenades and rubber-coated steel bullets. At least 110 Palestinian civilians, including worshippers, Mosque guards, reporters and cameramen, have been injured, and occupying forces obstructed ambulances from reaching the injured. Twenty of the injured have been transferred to the hospital, with three in critical condition who suffered injuries to the head and chest areas, including Anas Siyam, a Palestinian boy, who was hit with a rubber-coated steel bullet in the chest. Sheikh Omar Al-Kiswani, director of the compound, was also assaulted by Israeli occupying forces. Reports indicate that an elderly man was shot in the eye with a rubber-coated steel bullet and Tamer Khalaf, age 29, was assaulted and sprayed with toxic gas prior to being detained by occupying forces.

In this volatile context, on Sunday morning, 13 September, in an act of incitement and attempt to breach the sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, right-wing Israeli Minister of Agriculture Uri Ariel entered Al-Haram Al-Sharif, escorted by

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heavily armed Israeli occupying forces and more than 30 extremist Israeli settlers. Again, today, 145 extremist Israeli settlers broke into Al-Haram Al-Sharif via the Moroccan Gate, provoking worshippers and vandalizing the Mosque. Equally disturbing, Israeli occupying forces damaged Al-Haram Al-Sharif, breaking windows and partially burning prayer rugs due to gun fire inside the Mosque. In addition, Israel, the occupying Power, has imposed restrictions on Palestinians, denying almost all worshippers entry into the Holy Site, including children and women. Moreover, last week, Israeli War Minister Moshe Yaalon denied access to two Palestinian groups who wished to worship at Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Such provocative incidents only intensify and exacerbate religious sensitivities and the extremely fragile situation on the ground.

As we witness the persistent deterioration of conditions on the ground due to Israel's other illegal actions throughout Occupied Palestine and against the Palestinian civilian population, and in the absence of peace prospects, we are compelled again to provide a caution regarding the far-reaching risks of these provocations and incitement at Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We also underscore in this regard the recent statement by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, who stressed, inter alia, that: "Political and religious leaders have a responsibility to act against extremists, who undermine the rule of law."

At the same time, we regret to inform you that illegal actions overtly intended to assert Israeli control over the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound also continue unabated, despite the calls and appeals against such actions. We firmly reject any provocative plans to spatially and temporally divide the compound. We reiterate the imperative of respect for the long-standing arrangements and historic status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, as has been agreed to and respected by all parties for decades, and we recall the determination of the Security Council that all such measures by Israel, the occupying Power, "to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recent 'basic law' on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith".

In this context, we reiterate that all illegal Israeli actions at Al-Haram Al-Sharif and throughout the rest of Occupied East Jerusalem are in violation of the numerous relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for a cessation of Israeli policies and measures aimed at altering the character, legal status and demography of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in violation of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits such actions. We appeal to the international community to act in word and deed to compel respect by Israel, the occupying Power, for all of its obligations under international law.

The Security Council, in accordance with its primary Charter duty for the maintenance of international peace and security, must give urgent attention to these disturbing developments and must call for an end to all provocations and incitement at Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Occupied East Jerusalem and throughout the rest of Occupied Palestine by Israel, the occupying Power, and its extremist Israeli settlers. It is clear that such actions are aimed at illegally and forcibly further entrenching Israeli control over Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Occupied East Jerusalem and must be rejected unequivocally. Moreover, it is clear that such actions risk the further destabilization of this fragile situation with unforeseen, dangerous consequences

that must be averted and must instead be replaced with serious efforts to calm the situation and revive the prospects for peace on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the international consensus on the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 552 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. Those letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 11 September 2015 (A/ES-10/689-S/2015/703) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations